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USE OF AN ORAL IMMOBILIZING AGENT TO CAPTURE A HARRIS' HAWK (*Parabuteo unicinctus*)

MICHAEL M. GARNER

A 5 yr old, captive bred Harris' Hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) routinely used for falconry purposes was lost while being flown during a severe thunderstorm in the spring of 1987. The hawk was wearing a single 216 MHz transmitter (Beacon Products, Salt Lake City, Utah) attached to a tail mount. Using a radio receiver (Rb-4 Falconer, Custom Electronics, Urbana, Illinois), the hawk was relocated the following day.

For 6 d the hawk was observed catching and feeding on numerous small rodents. The hawk was also observed robbing several Black-billed Magpie (*Pica pica*) nests of newly hatching nestlings. Due to the abundant availability of prey the hawk refused to return to the falconer when offered food. Several attempts were made to trap the hawk using pigeons (*Columba* sp.) and quail (*Coturnis* sp.) and various Bal-Chartri traps (Berger, D. and Mueller, H., The Bal-Chartri: a trap for the birds of prey. Bird-Banding vol. XXX, January 1959). The hawk cautiously avoided all trapping attempts and would only accept food items from the falconer if left near the perching hawk, or if food was thrown in the hawk's direction.

Previous capture methods being unsuccessful, chemical immobilization was considered as a means of retrieving the hawk. Because of possible impact damage caused by an anesthetic dart, traditional methods of administering an immobilizer were unacceptable. Since the hawk was

indirectly accepting food from the falconer, an alternative was to use an immobilizing agent injected into food that, following ingestion, would act to slow the hawk enough for capture.

Oral immobilizing agents have been used to capture wild birds (Martin, L. L., Comparison of methozymol, Alpha-chloralose and two barbiturates for capturing doves. Proceedings of the 21st. Annual Conference of the Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners, 1967; William, L. and Philips, R., Capturing Sandhill Cranes with alpha-chloralose. *J. Wildl. Mgmt.* 37(1): 94-97, 1973). Ketamine HCl, however, has apparently not been used as an oral immobilizing agent for capturing birds. Effective oral doses of ketamine HCl are usually 2-3 times higher than Parenteral doses (Fowler, M., Zoo and wild animal medicine, 2nd. ed. W.B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, PA, 1986), and oral immobilizing agents have previously been rejected as a poor means of restraining wild animals (Fowler 1986).

Ketamine HCl (Ketaset®-Bristol Veterinary Products) at a dosage of 100 mg/kg^a was injected into a 30 gm piece

^a Routine intramuscular dosage for large raptors is 20-30 mg/kg, when not given simultaneously with Xylozine or Diazepam (P. Redig, pers. comm.).

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